WILD NEWS

Prince William Wildflower Society

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 2015-03 May-June 2015

"The Delights and Challenges of Owning One of Virginia's Natural Area Preserves," with Marcia Maybee

Membership Meeting, Prince William Wildflower Society
Monday, May 18, 2015,
7:30 p.m.

Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church, 8712 Plantation Lane, Manassas, Virginia 20110

Please join us on May 18 for this unusual presentation by VNPS Conservation Chair Marcia Mabee. Ms. Mabee is the owner of Naked Mountain in Nelson County, a property that in 2006 was placed under an open-space easement held by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and designated by DCR as the 49th Natural Area Preserve in Virginia. Currently, there are 61 Natural Area Preserves across the state in a system managed by the Natural Heritage Division of DCR.

Marcia's presentation, "The Delights and Challenges of Owning One of Virginia's Natural Area Preserves," is a story about how the Naked Mountain Natural Area Preserve came to be and the continuing discoveries and obligations inherent within the preserve.

Now retired, Ms. Mabee for twenty-five years provided Washington, D.C. representation for non-profit public health organizations. She holds a Masters of Public Health degree and a PhD in health policy. She currently serves as conservation committee chair on the Virginia Native Plant Society board of directors. She also blogs about living in the middle of a natural area preserve and is writing a memoir entitled "Naked Mountain."

Wildflower Seekers Wanted

Do you ever wish that you had a companion to accompany you on a native plant adventure? Do you know where the best wildflowers can be seen and what time they bloom? If your answer to the first question is yes, and your answer to the second is yes *or* no, then I have an offer for you! I propose to start an impromptu Wildflower Seekers Group. Just send your name, phone number, and email address to me at ***nvehrs1@yahoo.com,*** and I will try to organize a little local group. I know that sometimes it is a challenge to schedule walks well in advance, especially in spring when the weather and plant bloom times can be so variable. This way, when the weather looks good, we can informally plan a last minute (notice of at least a day or two) hike. These hikes or walks could be to nearby spots such as Conway Robinson State Forest or Dove's Landing, or we could go farther afield to places like Hickory Hollow Natural Area Preserve on the Northern Neck or Shenandoah National Park. Contact me! ***~~ Nancy Vehrs, president, PWWS***

Prince William Wildflower Society Membership Meeting, Monday, March 16, 2015
Bull Run Universalist Unitarian Church, Main Street, Manassas

President Nancy Vehrs opened the meeting with an introduction of guest speaker Gary Fleming, vegetation ecologist with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Natural Heritage Program. His presentation took us on a visually stimulating tour of the "Ecological Regions and Natural Communities of Virginia."

During the business meeting that followed, Nancy gave an update on Secretary Karen Waltman, who had recent surgery.

Nancy indicated that signup sheets were in the back of the room and asked for volunteers to sign up for the Bluebell Festival on April 12th, the Garden Tour on April 19 and/or the Plant Sale on May 9.

Bill and Jane Lehman are moving and wish to get rid of about 400 pots that they have accumulated.

Marion Lobstein announced that the children's book by Susan Leopold, illustrated by Nicky Staunton, *Isabella's Peppermint Flowers* is available for sale. The proceeds will go to the Flora of Virginia Project. Marion also indicated that she would be the guest speaker for the Piedmont Chapter on Sunday, March 22. Marion and Sally Anderson will be giving *Flora of Virginia* Workshops on April 3 and April 10. Reservations are required by contacting Blandy Experimental Farm at (703) 622- 0676.

Nancy announced that volunteers are needed to for the NoVA Natives Project.

Nancy thanked Rose Breece, Janet Wheatcraft, and Dee Brown for bringing refreshments.

Bill and Jane Lehman donated a box of books to be used as door prizes.

Door prizes:

Glen McDonald, *Native Plants of the South;* Deanna High; *Trees and Shrubs of Virginia*; Charles Smith, *Virginia Woody Shrubs*, Veronica Tangiri, *Native Alternatives to Invasives*; Janis Stone, *Wildflowers of the Shenandoah and Blue Ridge Mountains*.

Those in attendance: Suzy Stasulis, Tamie Boone, Toni Woods, Diane and Rick Flaherty, Amy Hamilton, Rose Breece, Leslie Paulson, Janet Wheatcraft, Harry Glasgow, Jack and Deanna High, Bill and Jane Lehman, Helen Rawls, Dean Arkema, Cassandre Arkema, Catherine Toulsy, Donna Murphy, Sheryl Pollock, Brenda Hallam, Jeanne Endrikat, Paul Modrak, Glen Macdonald, Dee Brown, Susan Caudle, Joyce and Mike Wenger, Tom Attanaro, Jessie Struthers (Potowmack Chapter), Mary Sherman, Janis Stone, Joyce and Tom Andrew, Marion Lobstein, Nancy Vehrs, and speaker Gary Fleming. *--Tamie Boone, vice president, PWWS*

PWWS EXTENDS A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL SPRING EVENTS VOLUNTEERS

Bluebell Festival

Booth

Joyce Andrew
Barbara Farron
Laura Farron
Harry Glasgow
Aimee Martin
Suzy Stasulis
Nancy Vehrs

PWWS/PWCA Member Tour Leaders

Judy Gallagher
Harry Glasgow
Charlie Grymes
Charles Smith
Nancy Vehrs

Manassas Battlefield Saturday in the Park

Margaret Fisher (Plant NOVA Natives Campaign)
Harry Glasgow
Corey Miles
Nancy Vehrs

PWWS Garden Tour

Garden Hosts

Barbara & Phil Deegan
Harry Glasgow & Nancy Vehrs
Janet Wheatcraft

Volunteer Hosts/Refreshments

Joyce Andrew
Nancy Arrington
Tamie Boone
Rose Breece
Theresa DeFluri
Beverly Houston
Suzy Stasulis
Veronica Tangiri
Carol Thompson
Karen Waltman
Joyce & Mike Wenger

Marie and Paul Davis
Jeanne Endrikat
Diane & Rich Flaherty
Bobbie Frye
Harry Glasgow
Deanna High
Phil Louer
Glen Macdonald
Brian McDougal
Lois Montgomery
Charles Smith
Linda Stoltz
Christine Sunda
Veronica Tangiri
Carol Thompson
Nancy Vehrs
Karen Waltman
Joyce and Mike Wenger (& Taylor)
Janet Wheatcraft

PWWS Native Plant Sale

Nancy, Caroline, and Paul Arrington
Tamie Boone
Dee Brown
Tiana Camfiord

EVENTS

MAY

Saturday May 16, Tuesday May 26, and Sunday May 31, Wildlife Garden Workdays, Prince William Conservation Alliance. Stone House at Merrimac Farm, 15020 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville. We planted more than 50 trees and shrubs this last spring and the wildlife garden is taking shape. Now we need to keep up the good work. Planting is a tough job, but all is easily lost without long-term maintenance. Please join us for a morning of weeding, pruning, watering, and wildlife watching. **See below for the complete schedules for May, June, and July.**

Saturday, May 16, at 9:00 a.m.
Tuesday, May 26, at 9:00 a.m.
Sunday, May 31, at 2:00 p.m.

Tuesday, June 2, at 9:00 a.m.
Saturday, June 13, at 9:00 a.m.
Friday, June 19, at 9:00 a.m.
Tuesday, June 23, at 9:00 a.m.
Sunday, June 28, at 2:00 p.m.

Tuesday, July 7, at 9:00 a.m.
Tuesday, July 21, 9:00 a.m.
Sunday, July 26, at 2:00 p.m.

Questions and RSVP (appreciated) to (703) 490-5200, *alliance@pwconserve.org*.

Saturday, May 16, 9:00 a.m. to noon. **Prince William Wildflower Society Workday at Manassas Park Elementary School**. This is the Saturday after our plant sale. Join us in Manassas Park to work alongside MPES elementary school children and their parents. Bring gloves, tools, or wheelbarrow. For details, please contact **Nancy Arrington** at *narrington1@verizon.net* or (703) 368-8431.

Saturday, May 16, 2015, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The Master Gardener Association of the Central Rappahannock Area presents the **3rd Annual Living in the Garden: A Plant Lover's Symposium**, Lee Hall, University of Mary Washington, 1301 College Avenue, Fredericksburg, Va. 22401. The Symposium will feature presenters **Nancy Vehrs**, "Attracting Birds and Butterflies with a Beautiful Native Plant Garden," **Colston Burrell**, "The Art of Perennial Combinations," **Cindy Conner**, "Grow a Sustainable Diet," and **Guy Mussey**, "Plant Tour of University of Mary Washington Grounds." The cost of the Symposium is $40 for MGACRA members and $45 for non-members. Cost includes a boxed lunch. Registration deadline is May 9, 2015; early registration by April 1, 2015, deduct $5 from cost. For more information, please contact Ann Gorrell at *anngorrell@hughes.net* or VCE Stafford Office: (540) 658-8000. For full description of lectures, bio of presenters, and directions, please go to *www.mgacra.org*.

Monday, May 18, 2015, 7:30 p.m., Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, Va., "The Delights and Challenges of Owning One of Virginia's Natural Area Preserves," presented by **Marcia Mabee,** conservation committee chair, the Virginia Native Plant Society board of directors. Her presentation is the

story of how the Naked Mountain Natural Area Preserve came to be and the discoveries and obligations inherent within the preserve that continue to this day.

Thursday, May 21, 2015, 7:30 p.m., "**History of the Town of Occoquan," by Earnie Porta**, former mayor of Occoquan. McCoart Administrative Center, Room 107 A&B in the Developmental Services Building, Prince William,Va. 22192. Sponsored by Meetings of Historic Prince William. For more information and directions, see *http://www.historicprincewilliam.org.*

Saturday, May 23, 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., **Prince William Soil and Water District Stream Monitoring: Rippon Landing Neighbor Hood Park,** 15125 Blackburn Road, Dale City. Join Cynthia and Patrick Randolph for stream monitoring and discuss how Dale City residents can help improve the health of their streams and watersheds. RVSP to Veronica Tangiri at *waterquality@pwswcd.org* or call (571) 379-7514.

Tuesday, May 26, Biological Stream Monitoring meeting with the Lake Jackson Association, Cole District Area. Prince William Soil and Water District Stream Monitoring. For time and venue please contact Veronica Tangiri at *waterquality@pwswcd.org.*

Wednesday, May 27, Biological Stream Monitoring meeting in the Brentsville Area, Prince William Soil and Water District Stream Monitoring. For time and venue please contact Veronica Tangiri at *waterquality@pwswcd.org.*

public on the importance of ecological sustainability and how we can protect the environment and exceed requirements in a cost effective manner.

A tour of the Landfill Eco-Park will be held on **Saturday, June 6, 2015 at 10:00 a.m.** as a followup to the conversation. For more info and to RSVP (seating is limited to 40), email *alliance@pwconserve.org* or call (703) 490-5200.

[Image sources: *H. americana* on rocks, Sally and Andy Wasowski, NPIN Image Gallery #22754 and Parnassia glauca, R.W. Smith, NPIN Image Gallery#32236, both accessed at *www.wildflower.org*; *Heuchera americana L.*, W.P.C. Barton, *Vegetable material medica of the United States*, V. 2 (1818), accessed *at http://plantillustrations.org*; *Heuchera micrantha, H. americana var. americana, H. richardsonii*, accessed at Flora of North America *eFloras.org*; *Primula meadia*, Kenneth Lawless, accessed at *www.dcr.virginia.gov*; Janet Wheatcraft bottle garden, courtesy of Cheryl Hancock; all other photos, Deanna LaValle High.]

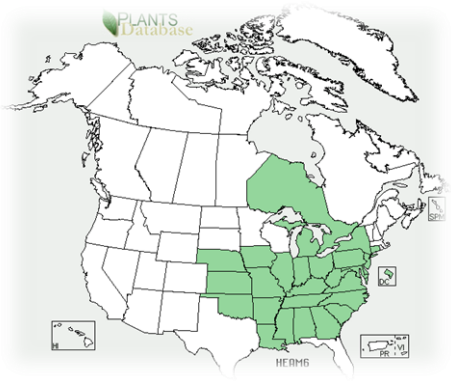
JUNE

Thursday, June 4 at 7:30 p.m., "PWC Eco-Park: Environment, Energy and Education," with speaker Tom Smith, Prince William County Public Works, Solid Waste Division Chief. Bull Run UU Church, 9250 Main St., Manassas. Prince William County is working to transform the Landfill into a community resource for producing green energy, recovering valuable material and providing opportunities for research and education. The Eco Park will focus on the three E's -- Environment (Sustainability and Environmental Protection), Energy (Renewable Technologies) and Education (STEM and Ecology). The goal of the Eco-Park is to educate the

American Alumroot (*Heuchera americana*)

By MARION BLOIS LOBSTEIN
Professor Emeritus, NVCC

Walking in the woods in the fall and winter and into early spring, you do not see much ground cover of living leaves. Some of the few evergreen leaves you may find are the handsome basal leaves of *Heuchera americana*, American alumroot, which help add color and interest to the forest floor or a rock ledge this time of year. (In this article, the common name "alumroot" refers to *H. americana*). Alumroot, a member of the saxifrage family (Saxifragaceae), blooms from May until mid-summer. Its habitat is dry, rocky ground and dry woods with a range from Connecticut to Georgia west to Michigan. The genus name of *Heuchera* was created in honor of the eighteenth century German physician and botanist J.H. Heucher (also a friend of Linnaeus), and the species name *americana* means "of America;" both parts of the scientific name were assigned by Linnaeus. Other names for alumroot are American sanicle, chiff weed, ground maple, rock geranium, and split rock. Most of these refer to the shape of the leaf or the common growth site on rocks. Of the other eight species of *Heuchera* included in the *Flora of Virginia*, only *H. hispida*, Purple alumroot, and *H. pubescens*, Marbled alumroot, are found in our area. The garden plant Coral bells are cultivars of various species of *Heuchera*.



The flowers of alumroot are rather small and inconspicuous individually but are attractive in mass. Flowering stems may be up to two feet or taller with numerous bell-shaped flowers less than 1/4 inch-long. The flower color varies from green to pink to purple. The five-parted, bell-shaped calyx has five petals and five stamens inserted on it. The pistil has two styles with stigmas and the ovary is partially inferior. Small bees are the primary pollinators. The greenish red, oval capsule fruits that develop are also small (approximately 1/8 inch in size) but add color to the plant until the fruits are fully ripe and turn brown. The very tiny black seeds have dark red barbs visible only under magnification. Seed dispersal is mechanical when the capsule opens and the seeds drop out to the forest floor. The single flowering stem is usually leafless but may have one or two leaves. The evergreen basal leaves have 4 to 6 inch-long petioles. The smooth to slightly hairy leaves are usually broadly heart-shaped with 5 to 9 shallow lobes and blunt teeth. Underground storage stems or rhizomes of this species are well developed.

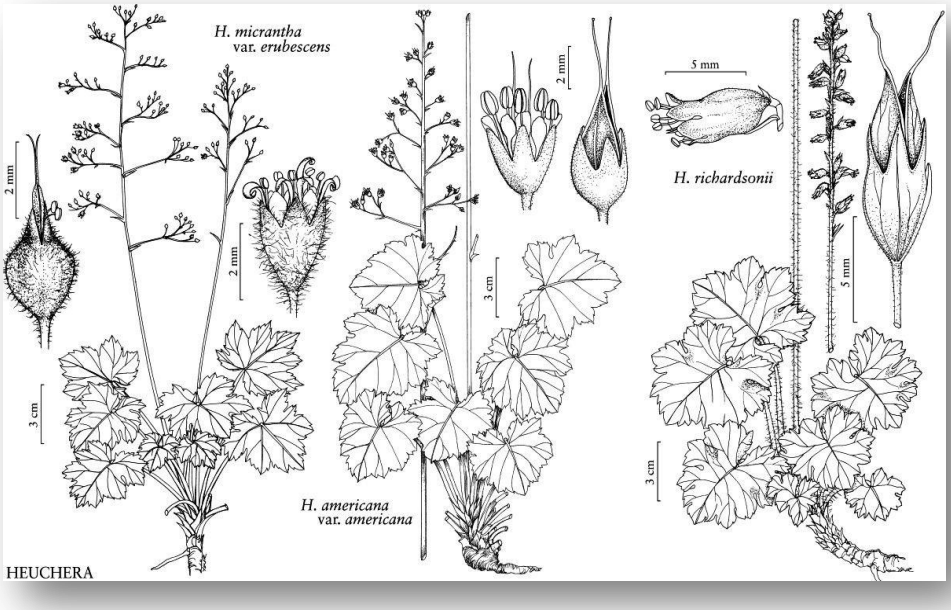
Alumroot leaves were eaten in the spring by some Indian tribes and were used to make poultices for wounds or teas for various ailments. It is the rhizome or "root," however, which has had the most medicinal uses. The rhizomes have stringent and styptic properties due to the presence of high levels of tannins. Extracts of the rhizome have been used by American Indians and in folk medicine to treat heart disease, sore throat, diarrhea, thrush, bowel complaints, female problems, hemorrhages, even malignant tumors and skin ailments. This species is the source of a drug, "heuchera," which supposedly has antiseptic and astringent properties. At high dosages, however, extract of alumroot can act as a gastric irritant or even cause kidney and liver failure.

Alumroot may not be one of our showiest native plants, but it certainly adds interest and beauty to our deciduous woods all year round. In late spring and summer, you can relish its handsome flowers and fruits. This fall and winter, when you are enjoying a stroll or brisk **w**alk through the woods, keep your eye out for the basal leaves of this evergreen plant.

Family name, botanical authority and date named	Common name of family	Genera in family in FOV	Species in family in FOV	Genera in family in FOV	Botanical authority and date	Taxonomic changes and notes
Saxifragaceae A.L. de Jussieu 1789	Saxifrage	9	20	*Astilbe* (False Goat's-beard) *Boykinia* (Brook Saxifrage) *Chrysoplenium* (Golden Saxifrage) *Heuchera* (Alumroots) *Hydatica* (Appalachian Saxifrage) *Micranthes* (Saxifrages) *Mitella* (Miterworts) *Sullivantia* (Sullivantias) *Tiarella* (Foamflowers)	Buchenau-Hamilton ex D. Don 1925 T. Nuttall 1834 Linnaeus 1753 Linnaeus 1753 Necker ex. A. Gray 1821 Haworth 1812 Linnaeus 1753 J. Torrey & A. Gray 1842 Linnaeus 1787	No change *Theroophon* –synonym No change Some species name changes Formerly Saxifraga michauxii and Micranthes michauxii Formerly Saxifraga species No change No change Minor species changes
Penthoraceae Ryeberg ex Britton 1901	Ditch Stonecrop	1	1	*Penthorum* (Ditch Stonecrops)	Linnaeus 1753	Genus has been variously placed in Saxifraceae and Crassulaceae as well as Penthoraceae
Iteaceae J. Agardh 1858	Sweetspire	1	1	*Itea* (Sweetspires)	Linnaeus 1753	Formerly in Saxifragaceae
Parnassiaceae A. Gray 1821	Grass-of-Parnassus	1	2	*Parnassia* (Grasses of Parnassus)	Linnaeus 1753	Formerly in Saxifragaceae
Hydrangeaceae Dumortier 1829	Hydrangea	3	5	*Decumaria* (Climbing Hydrangeas) *Hydrangea* (Hydrangeas) *Philadelphus* (Mock Oranges)	Linnaeus 1753 Linnaeus 1753 Linnaeus 1753	Formerly in Saxifragaceae Formerly in Saxifragaceae Formerly in Saxifragaceae
Grossulariaceae A.P. de Candolle 1805	Current/ Gooseberry	1	5	*Ribes* (Gooseberries)	Linnaeus 1753	Formerly in Saxifragaceae

Heuchera americana (American alumroot) and Saxifragaceae Taxonomy

By MARION BLOIS LOBSTEIN
Professor Emeritus, NVCC



The family name Saxifragaceae is credited to A.L. de Jussieu in 1789 and is based on the genus name Saxifraga used by Linnaeus in 1753. Saxifraga—meaning "rock breaker"—is derived from the Latin *saxum*, for rock, and *frango,* meaning to break. Species of saxifrages were know in Europe since ancient times and were observed often growing in rock crevices. Medically, they also were supposed to break down kidney and gall stones in people.

Heuchera americana (American alumroot) is a species in the Saxifragaceae, the saxifrage family. The genus of American alumroot, *Heuchera*, was named by Linnaeus in 1753 for a friend, the German physician and botanist J.H. von Heucher. There are approximately 55 species in this genus and all are found only in North America. Linnaeus also assigned the species epithet Americana. Frederick Pursh, a German-American botanist, assigned the species epithets to the other two species found in our area, *H. hispida*, Purple alumroot, and *H. pubescens*, Marbled alumroot, in the early 1800s. John Clayton included this species in the 1762 *Flora Virginica*, and it appears to be one of his herbarium specimens housed in the British History Museum. Since, only minor taxonomic changes have been made for the *Heuchera* species in our area.

Since the 1990s, Saxifragaceae has been redefined by modern taxonomists. In the *Flora of Virginia*, the saxifrage family is one that has been split into a number of other families. These changes are based on molecular studies (primarily DNA) as well as morphological data dating back to the early 1800s. Saxifragaceae now includes roughly 30 genera and 650 species found primarily in the Northern Hemisphere. In the *Flora of Virginia*, nine genera and 20 species are treated in the saxifrage family, and seven additional genera with 14 species placed in five families formerly were treated in the Saxifragaceae. These families are Penthoraceae (Ditch stonecrop family), Iteaceae (Sweetspire family), Parnassiaceae (Grass-of-Parnassus family, Hydrangeaceae (Hydrangea family), and Grossulariaceae (Gooseberry family). (See the chart accompanying this article for additional information.)

Ironically, in the *Flora of Virginia*, the Saxifragaceae—the name based on the genus *Saxifraga*—no longer has any species in the genus. Based on the *Flora*, Saxifrage species found in our area are *Saxifraga virginiensis* (Early saxifrage), now *Micranthes virginiensis*; *S. pensylvanica* (Swamp saxifrage), now *M. pensylvanica*; *S. micranthidiflora* (Lettuce saxifrage), now M. *micranthidiflora*; and *S. michauxii* (Michaux's saxifrage), now *Hydatica petiolaris*. There are still 9 species of Saxifraga included in the *Flora of North America*, but these are found in the far north or western regions of North America.

The 1762 *Flora Virginica* did include the following genera traditionally present in the Saxifragaceae: *Heuchera*, *Saxifraga*, *Mitella*, *Tiarella*, *Penthorum*, *Itea*, *Hydrangea*, and *Ribes*.

The chart lists the families, genera, number of species, and major taxonomic changes for the traditional Saxifragaceae. As the chart indicates, many of these changes had been proposed by the early to mid-1800s. At the time of the proposed changes in the early 1800s, of course, morphological characteristics only were used to determine placement.

Heucheras in the Garden: A very short summary!
Heucheras are certainly hot in terms of hybridization activity, and with many new cultivars and strains appearing each year, it has become harder to figure out which ones might become keepers in the garden. Beginning in the early 1990s with the introduction of the hybrid 'Palace Purple' and the subsequent cross of *H. americana* 'Dale's Strain' with 'Palace Purple' producing *H.* 'Montrose Ruby,' the field of new *Heucheras,* often with dramatic, dark foliage with a silvery overlay, in the nursery trade has exploded in recent years. *Heuchera* have been crossed, too, with *Tiarella* (Foamflower, also in the Saxafragacaeae family) via what William Cullina calls "a bit of garden sorcery," to produce *Heucherella,* in order to gain the lovely flowers of Foamflower *and* the great leaves of Heuchera on one plant. Cullina also notes that all species of *Heuchera* look good either massed or naturally planted around rocks (Note Heuchera's affinity with rocks, above, in Marion's articles!) Common Alumroot is quite lovely in itself, but it may be difficult to get the species except at native plant sales and vendors. Heucheras are easy to grow in part sun to part shade and dryish soil: too much sun may bleach out the colorful leaves and too much shade can make the plant look peaky. Heucheras are partly to fully evergreen, according to Carole Otteson, changing leaf color according to their exposure to sun and cold. For an example, she cites *H. Americana* leaves as turning red in cold weather. Propagation is by seed or division. Rick Darke notes in the *American Woodland Garden* that Alumroots are promiscuous, and will hybridize readily with each other in the garden setting, often producing some lovely if accidental children in the process.

Luckily for us, Mount Cuba has issued a research report based on their three-year trial of over 83 different *Heuchera* cultivars derived from two Eastern North American species, *H. americana* and *H. villosa.* The *Heuchera Report* (2014) is available for free from Mount Cuba, and contains just about everything one needs to know—including numerous photographs—about the new Heuchera hybrids, including how they stack up against the two species. There is an excellent chart of performance ratings for each cultivar and expert advice on planting, propagating, light and soil requirements, diseases, pests, and other issues related to growing these beautiful *Heuchera.* To read online or to download the report, go to *http://www.mtcubacenter.org/horticultural-research/trial-garden-research/*. ***–Deanna LaValle High***

[Sources: *Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada* by William Cullina (2000); *the American Woodland Garden* by Rick Darke (2002); the *Native Plant Primer* by Carole Otteson (1995); The *Heuchera Report*, Mt. Cuba Research Center (2014)].

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY
A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 83, Manassas, Virginia, 20108-0083

Next Meeting: Monday, May 18, 2015, 7:30 p.m.
"The Delights and Challenges of Owning One of Virginia's Natural Area Preserves,"
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